

Brinkley Defends Broadcast News

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many complaints against broadcast news come from Americans unfamiliar with serious journalism who think television exists to entertain and not inform, NBC commentator David Brinkley said Tuesday. And he supported congressional scrutiny of broadcast news.

"There are never any complaints about bias and slanting when the news is good," Brinkley told a Senate Judiciary subcommittee investigating freedom of the press. "They appear only when the news is bad, and nowadays it often is."

News broadcasters are on the same tube as a succession of "comedians and jugglers," Brinkley said, consequently, "when a face comes on that is not wearing a toothpaste smile and says there's been another riot and more war casualties and taxes are going up ... it looks even worse by comparison."

Brinkley said every time television airs pictures of urban arson and looting, for example, he gets hundreds of letters asking why the networks "glorify and dignify this kind of unspeakable conduct" by televising it?

Brinkley said many in the audience want to know about the bad news or "or ought to know about it" while the complainers are mainly "listeners who have never until recent years been exposed to anything like serious journalism."

Brinkley told Chairman Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., D-N.C., and

Sen. Roman Hruska, R-Neb.,—only subcommittee members present—that he does not think there is any intimidation of broadcast news by critics even though some witnesses have testified in the past that the government is intimidating television news programs.

Brinkley said he supports the contention of Rep. William L. Springer, R-Ill., that Congress should continually survey television news and documentary programs and publicly criticize the networks when the lawmakers think a subject has been presented unfairly.

C. A. McKnight, editor of The Charlotte N.C., Observer and

president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, told the panel he is deeply concerned about recent developments he said could threaten freedom of the press and, consequently, the public's opportunity to get information.

McKnight cited the Supreme Court's recent split decision allowing The New York Times and other papers to publish the so-called Pentagon Papers about the origins of the Vietnam war. He said he was appalled at the government's attempt to restrain the newspapers from printing the reports and disturbed that some Supreme Court justices' deci-

sions lifting the injunctions were not more absolute in defending the newspapers.

McKnight also said the ASNE believes newsmen have a constitutional right to refuse to disclose their news sources. He said government subpoenas of newsmen and their unused notes and film clips have a chilling effect on news organizations.

"BUTTERNUTS"

Northerners who sympathized with the South during the Civil War were referred to as "butternuts." The term was suggested by the "butternut" color of the Confederate uniform.